(c) what are the reasons for the shortfall; if any, in achievement of the target; and

(d) whether it is a fact that there is a ban on opening of new post offices; if so, since when and what are the reasons therefor and by when it is proposed to be lifted in Madhya Pradesh?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SANTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) The information is furnished in the enclosed Statement (*See below*).

(b) and (c) During 1983-84, 278 rural post offices were due to be opened against which 262 were actually opened. The shortfall of 16 was due to the fact that the Central Government ban on creation of posts came into effect in January, 1984. For the same reason, against the target of 255 villages to be brought under mobile postal counter scheme, 236 villages were actually covered.

During 1984-85 and 1985-86, due to the continuance of the ban no programme of opening of post offices/extension of mobile services was implemented. However, on the basis of a special relaxation given by the Ministry of Finance, 6 rural post offices were opened in the Circle during 1984-85.

(b) No, Sir. There is no ban on opening of post offices as such. There is, however, a ban imposed by the Central Government on creation of posts. As opening of new post offices involves sanction of posts, no programme of opening of post offices is being implemented. However, according to recent instructions, additional manpower required for the implementation of Plan schemes can be approved by the Ministry of Finance. The Department is at present taking a fresh look at the norms for opening of post offices in rural areas in the light of recommendations of the Committee of Enquiry on extra-departmental system and other relevant circumstances. The proposal is that as and when this exercise is completed, a fresh survey may be conducted and to the extent justified, proposals for opening of post offices may be taken up with the Ministry of Finance. This position holds good for Madhya Pradesh as for other postal Circles.

Statement

TRIBAL AREAS

Jhabua, Maudla, Sutguja and Bastar districts and Tehsils/block/villages notified as tribal in the districts of Dhar, Kargone, Khandwa, Ratlam, Betul, (including Betul Community Development block) Seoni, Balaghat, Hosangabad, Shahdol, Siddi, Rajgarh, Bilaspur, Durg, Rajnandgaon, Raipur, Morena and Chhindwara.

BACKWARD AREAS

Morena, Shivpuri, Guna, Sagar, Damoh, Vidisha, Khargone and Rajnand Gaon Distt. (Excluding urban areas/agglomeration), Panna, Sidhi and Shahdol Districts in Madhya Pradesh. Harsud Tehsil of East Nimar District and Seoni Tehsil of Seoni District.

Practicability of New timings of Central Government Offices

3126. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any representations from Public against the invonvenience caused by 5 day week in Government Offices;

(b) whether the working hours has recently been increased for Government Offices to make up the deficiency of granting one extra weekly holiday;

(c) whether any realistic assessment been made of the practicability of the new timings from the point of view of punctuality and staff convenience and if so, what are the result thereof; and

(d) whether Government propose to consider to revert back to the 6 day week?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRI BIREN SINGH ENGTI): (a) No serious complaint from, or any specific instance of inconvenience to, the general public has been brought to the notice of this Ministry.

(b) The increase in working hours by 30 minutes per day for the office staff of the Central Government with effect from 17-11-86 was not done to make up the deficiency arising out of granting one extra weekly holiday. The increase was effected after taking a decision in the light of 4th Pay Commission's Recommendations that the working hours of office staff in Central Government may be suitably increased.

(c) Before increase of working hours, the Government of India Administrative Offices were working for seven hours per day (including half an hour for lunch) within the limits prescribed for commencement and closure of offices, namely, 9.00 A.M. and 6.00 P.M. Even after increase in daily working hours by 30 minutes office timings have been adjusted within these limits.

(d) There is no such proposal at the moment.

Export and uprootment of rare herbs from Himalayas

3127. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that many medicinal rare herbs found in the Himalayas are uprooted and exported;

(b) if so, whether Government have drawn up any plan to ensure that these herbs do not become extinct; and

(c) if not, the reasons thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI Z. R. ANSARI): (a) There are some reports regarding exploitation of rare herbs found in Himalayas.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

2128. [*Transferred to the 3rd December*, 1986.]

Complaints of over and excessive charging by Telecommunications Department

3129. DR. MOHD. HASHIM KIDWAI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) what was the number of complaints against over or excessive billing by the Telecommunications Department received by Government during the first half of 1986 and what are the figures for the corresponding period in 1985; and

(b) what are the details of remedial action taken by Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SANTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) The number of complaints against over and excessive billing by the Telecommunications Department received by Government during the first half of 1986 is 42,702 and that for the corresponding period in 1985 is 41,446.

(b) The following steps are taken to reduce the incidence of over billing:

(1) To avoid clearical errors, instructions have already been issued to all the units to ensure proper care in billing and to rectify the mistakes if any, immediately and issue a revised bill to the subscribed wherever necessary. Moreover to eliminate mistakes in computation, the work of telephone billing and accounting has been computerised in the Metro districts of Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi and Madras.

(2) As far as technical faults are concerned the following steps have been taken: